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DE RUEHAK #2085 2261525

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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002085

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/07/2017

TAGS: EU PGOV PREL KV YI UN

SUBJECT: TURKEY VIEWS KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE AS INEVITABLE

REF: A. STATE 109526

¶B. ANKARA 1938

¶C. STATE 102187

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Kelly Degnan for Reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) We delivered REF A points to MFA Deputy Director General for the Balkans and Western Europe Hasan Asan. Asan reiterated that Turkey remains committed to resolving Kosovo's final status and acknowledged that Kosovo independence is inevitable. Furthermore, Turkey strongly supports the principles behind the Ahtissari plan as the foundation for continued Contact Group negotiations. Asan assured us that GOT policy on Kosovo closely parallels that of the U.S. and EU. However, recent Russian behavior in the UNSC and the discussion of Kosovo independence outside a UNSCR has left Turkey hesitant to get politically ahead of the U.S. and EU (REF B).

¶2. (C) Asan said the GOT has utilized every opportunity to engage Pristina and Belgrade on this issue. During several meetings with Kosovo PM Ceku, Asan reported that PM Erdogan has repeatedly advocated patience and faith in the UN process. Ceku assured Erdogan that the Kosovars would not consider pushing for independence until after Flag Day, November 28. Asan warned that comments regarding partitioning, like those made by EU Representative to the Troika German Ambassador Wolfgang Ichinger in Pristina, would further exacerbate an already tenuous situation.

¶3. (C) Should Kosovo unilaterally declare independence, Turkey will not be one of the first countries to extend formal support. Nevertheless, Asan and other officials have assured us that, once the lead nations have taken the brunt of the backlash from Serbia and Russia, the GOT will inevitably extend full diplomatic recognition. Domestically, GOT support for Kosovo's independence cuts across party lines. The several million Turks of Albanian descent constitute a sizable voting bloc that every party, including the ruling AKP, readily acknowledges. The political will exists to support Kosovo independence, but political resolve to face the repercussions of a leadership role remains weak. Asan emphasized the importance of a unified EU position in Turkey's decision making rubric. Should the EU as a whole join the U.S. and UK in supporting a unilateral declaration of independence, Turkey will rapidly follow.

¶4. (C) Turkey is an active participant in the NATO-led Kosovo Force and will remain so after independence, regardless of the means. Asan reiterated Turkey's desire to play a key role in any post-independence international civilian oversight body, construct or lead agency notwithstanding. Turkey has productively participated in similar institutions in Bosnia and believes it could make a useful contribution in Kosovo as well.

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